

In Danger of Getting Fired or Laid Off?

How to Know and What to Do if an Employment Termination Looms

By [Susan M. Heathfield](#)

[Employment termination](#)¹ - no matter the cause - is scary, disorienting, and disruptive to habitual patterns. Getting fired is never fun; layoffs are equally disheartening. In either scenario, your feelings of self worth and self esteem are dealt a blow. Just when you most need a positive outlook to help you find your next opportunity, you feel dizzy as if your whole world is spinning out of control. Don't despair. Better? This is how to prepare yourself for your next layoff or employment termination - before the fateful meeting.



Stay in Touch with the Grape Vine to Know When Layoffs Are Coming

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Signs of Impending Employment Termination

Signs of an impending employment termination are obvious in retrospect. If your employment is terminated for performance reasons, you will generally have had a [performance improvement plan](#)². Or, minimally, performance improvement discussion meetings with your supervisor will have escalated. Your manager may also have involved Human Resources staff in these discussions.

The [employee handbook](#)³ generally lists the circumstances and infractions under which [progressive discipline](#)⁴, up to and including employment termination, are meted out. You will want to become familiar with these guidelines.

If you believe your manager is building a case that will result in employment termination, you may want to speak to an attorney while you still have time to affect your employment. In other cases employment termination is the right answer. You may be underperforming or ill suited to the role you are expected to perform.

Layoffs are also often obvious in retrospect. Many companies will communicate an increasingly dire financial forecast; other companies leave employees in the dark about their financial situation. Signs that a layoff might occur include some or all of these.

Managers ask employees to implement cost saving measures. Both hiring and spending are frozen. Employees who leave are not replaced. Sales are down or the sales projection is dismal. Closed door meetings occur more frequently and the workplace feels on edge.

Additional Signs of an Impending Layoff

Robert Half International offers these additional signs that you may be targeted for a layoff:

- "Cost-cutting measures are being implemented throughout the organization.
- Your workload is lighter than usual or projects are being reassigned to others within your department.
- Your work is cyclical in nature, and you have significant periods of slow time.
- Your position or department isn't viewed as a revenue generator.
- You are no longer included in meetings in which you have typically participated.
- Your manager is showing increased interest in the status of your projects and the procedures planned for completing them."

Observe all of these signs carefully, however, and don't jump to wrong conclusions; these can also be signs that your company is well-managed and poised to survive an economic downturn.

Practice constant awareness of your environment. Listen and learn to read between the lines. Consider what your managers are not saying. Heed the rumor mill; employees in sales or accounting may have information you need to prepare for your future. Don't let an employment termination, for whatever reason, catch you unprepared.

Prepare for Employment Termination

These steps will position you for a quick [return to the workforce](#)⁵ in the event of employment termination. This is general career advice that any Human Resources professional would offer current employees who might be in danger of employment termination.

In fact, since many organizations fail to communicate openly with their employees, these are actions every employee needs to take throughout their careers. You want to minimize the downside of unpredictable events such as company bankruptcy, major customer loss, major supplier loss, or employment termination.

- **Live your life as if each day is the last day of your employment.**

--Keep your resume, application materials, and potential references and their contact information up-to-date.

-- Join and become actively involved on career appropriate online [social media](#)⁶ sites such as LinkedIn, Ryze, and Tribe.net. Facebook and Twitter are also gaining traction in the online networking world. You never know when you'll need an active network.

-- Make sure your professional association memberships are up-to-date. Participate.

--Spend a certain amount of your time away from work networking in your community, at civic events, in philanthropic organizations, on boards, and in groups that share your leisure interests.

--Eat lunch with a contact or friend several times a week to keep your network thriving even while you are still employed.